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SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 12
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BILL NO. SB69+SB70

I am a mom of two kids in Montana Schools. Jimmy is 9 years old and in 4th grade and Jacob is 7 years old and in the 2nd grade. They both attend Emily Dickinson School in Bozeman and are succeeding in school. Jacob is a normal, highly active boy that is doing great. Jimmy, my 9 year old, has Asperger's Syndrome along with some anger management issues. Asperger's Syndrome is a part of the Autism Spectrum at the high end. He is intelligent and does well with most educational things, but has a hard time writing and getting along with his peers. Currently, his writing is worse than his 2nd grade brothers. He has an IEP and a behavioral plan implemented and the school staff has been great. He meets with a resource aid to help him develop his writing and with the school psychologist to help develop his social skills.

Without the passing of these two bills – SB69 & SB70, I am afraid that Jimmy will be lost in the crowd. He isn't handicapped to a point of being unable to exist in a regular classroom, but without help, he will not do well in the coming years. If he loses his resource aid, or help from the school psychologist, he will not thrive and grow to his full potential. The help of these resources actually helps the entire student body because it frees up the teacher from spending extra time with Jimmy.

One of the reasons we moved to Montana over 4 years ago was for the quality of the education.

Our school district has 46 classrooms that exceed state standards for size! This means less time for each student. This is not the quality education that is necessary for our kids. The Bozeman elementary district is projected to add students next year, and if we lose income in addition to gaining students, all of our children will suffer.

I believe that children are our future. I also believe that there are many good and valuable programs that need support. Our kids should be given the highest priority when allocating funds from the State's general fund. A quality education is the best thing we can give our children. It is critical that we don't shortchange our kids – but fully support their education. The Governor's proposed budget will fall way short of doing that. Please pass SB69 & SB70. Thank you for your attention.

Thank you for your time today. I am here to urge you to pass Senate Bills 69 and 70. In doing so, you will increase funds to the state school funding formula. Without those funds our school district faces a major shortfall. If the district is left to balance the budget with such a shortfall, our children and community will suffer.

My husband and I have a collective family background in public education. We both are college graduates educated in the public school system. My father-in-law was a science and physical education teacher for nearly 30 years. My own father was a school superintendent. I have heard the ups and downs of public instruction most of my life. What resonates most about those conversations is the positive impact the school system can have on an individual, a family and a community.

If cuts need to be made across the district, I fear what that might mean for my children. I have a 2nd grader and a kindergartener at Emily Dickinson School. I am concerned that administrators would be forced to reduce staff. Fewer staff equates to larger class sizes.

Our son Noah is doing well in the 2nd grade. He is grasping new concepts, making good friends and enjoying his experience at Emily Dickinson. However, Noah is a child that has a hard time directing himself to initiate a task and to stay with that task until its completion. Noah has been fortunate in his experience with 3 dedicated teachers with in the Bozeman school district. Each has taken a personal interest in Noah. [Their individual attention to his needs have helped him to achieve success. It's the teacher's ability to provide that individual attention that allows them to know the student better. This knowledge helps the teacher to intervene more effectively to help the individual student make progress. Noah would not be as successful without that individual attention. I believe Noah's academic experience would suffer in a larger class size. As would his peers from the lack of personalized attention they currently are accustomed to receiving.

Academic studies show small class size carries many benefits.

A teacher in a small class has more time to spend with each student.

Fewer students mean fewer administrative tasks for each teacher.

Student discipline and student engagement in the learning process improves.

Smaller class sizes provide friendlier places which foster better relationships between children.

Smaller class size encourages students to engage in the classroom learning experience. Children get more time to speak while others listen.

Please help our schools. Please move education funding to a higher priority. Please value our children and the investment so that when decisions are made, educational priorities are first on your mind.

Thank You

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